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Spiritual Fitness

The 7-Steps to Living Well

by Laura M. Turner

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Spiritual Fitness

The 7-Steps To Living Well



by the author of *Brand New Body*

Laura M. Turner

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Introduction

How This Book Is Organized

It was my personal mission to make this book as simple and user-friendly as possible, written in terms easily understood.

Collectively, *The 7-Steps* are a process. Each step builds on the next. However, there may be a particular step you may want to work with for a longer period of time or come back to at a later date. That's great, too. This is *your* book, and should be explored in any way that feels comfortable for you. At the end of the book, I have also included sources for further research. Many were used to conceptualize this book and all will enhance your spiritual wisdom.

If you choose to follow the lineage of *Spiritual Fitness*, you will also find that each step has been broken down into three parts. In the first section of each step, I'll discuss the theory behind each concept. This will give you a birds-eye view of all the information and supply it in bite-sized pieces.

Secondly, I will discuss the application of each principle and how you can interplay it with theory. I've created this in a Frequently Asked Question (FAQ)

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format. I did it for a simple reason: While I was writing, my inner critic was forever pitching questions back to me. I hope you find this dialogue useful in your understanding of the concepts.

Finally, I'll discuss specifics and interactive ways to add each step into your life. I think you will find this format useful in creating new inroads to your own understanding of yourself and the unique qualities of *you*.

21 Things You Will Learn From Reading This Book

If you read this book from beginning to end and, more importantly, apply the principles I have outlined, you will most certainly glean these and greater results:

1. How to relax your body and tap into your inner wisdom.
2. How to cultivate a sense of connection with nature and learn to work with the forces, not against them.
3. How to cultivate a sense of spirituality and draw peace into your life.
4. How to use creative visualization to create pictures of your ideal vision.

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5. How to use your mind and creative visualization to bring your thoughts into reality.
6. How to apply the principles of creative visualization into all aspects of your life.
7. How to unravel your own inner wisdom and get in touch with your own unique self and gifts.
8. How to use meditation to manifest peace health, balance and joy into your life.
9. How to eat to prevent disease and energize your body.
10. Learn what foods support your health.
11. Learn the basics of a solid nutritional program.
12. Learn to use gentle exercises to support your body and promote health.
13. Learn to use exercises to open your body's energy centers and turn on the energy to attract health.
14. Learn about your energy centers, where they are and how you can use them to remain disease and pain-free.

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15. Learn how to “turn on” your energy centers to attract health and beauty into your life.
16. Learn some simple ways to improve your health just by making small changes in your body and lifestyle.
17. Learn how to create a lifestyle roadmap to keep you on an energetic and healthy pathway for the rest of your life.
18. Learn how to bridge Eastern and Western medicine together as “integrative” allowing the healthcare you receive to be superior for your body.
19. Learn how to be in charge and take control of your own healthcare.
20. Learn how to manage weight, eat healthy and use this program for a lifetime.
21. Learn to love your body and build a relationship with it so that it may communicate with you.

How To Use This Book

This book will help you create your own personal blueprint to a healthier lifestyle. After you read this book, you will have enough education and insight into

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yourself to move from the passenger's seat to the driver's seat of your own healthcare and lifestyle.

You will learn to listen to your feelings and listen to your body and, therefore, allow them to be your vehicle toward a healthier life.

Most of these techniques are not new; they are derived from ancient wisdom, holistic principles and just plain research and study.

How This Book Will Help You

It is my sincere wish that this book, applied, will help you come to a greater understanding of yourself, your body and its own unique needs.

As I've said, each step is meant to build upon the previous one. However, each step can be used on its own and meditated upon in an independent fashion. Through the application of each step, it is important that you make note of your body's responses.

We are all different in our needs. *Spiritual Fitness* simply aims to help you find your own personal, unique balance. In this way, the ideas I've presented to you *are* revolutionary. They act under the guise that we, as a society, want more healthy options. I hope you find this book serves as a guide toward your healthy balance. I'm so happy you've come. Welcome.

Laura M. Turner
July 2004
Upstate New York

Step One

Cultivating A Spiritual Discipline

A Spiritual Message:

*Bless me as I partake on this journey to myself.
Guide me to my own understanding and clear the way
of my path.*

*I understand I will not see beyond the bend in the road,
still: bless me, love me.*

And whersoever I should need to go, take me there.

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Chapter Overview:

What You Will Learn In This Chapter

Before we begin the “doing” exercises, it’s best to get a benchmark idea of where you are in your current mindset. Therefore, in this chapter you will:

- Learn how to relax your body and tap into your inner wisdom.
- Cultivate a sense of connection with nature and learn to work with the forces, not against them.
- Cultivate a sense of spirituality and draw peace into your life.

Spiritual Discipline Theory and Reflection:

Scan Your Global Perspective

Do you believe in a source greater than yourself? Have you ever experienced a miracle? A blessing? A situation of which you were sure someone or something intervened? Quite simply, I believe a strong faith is the first step to a better life.

Before you look at your faith from a personal standpoint, however, take the opportunity to explore this idea from a global perspective.

According to Gallup Polls (www.gallup.com), about ninety percent of Americans believe in God or a “higher power,” and this figure has not dropped in over fifty years of study. Worldwide believers also number about nine out of ten.

This “higher power” or “source” is identified by many different names. For our purposes here, a personal identity of the source is of less importance than the connection you make to it. For me, personally, this source is God. And for the purposes of our discussion, I will be using this reference.

Create A Connection To Nature

It is important for your connection with God to first realize you already have a deep connection with nature. When you’ve realized that the connection is

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larger than you could conceptualize, it's comforting. It also helps to explain the unexplainable.

Here's an example: When I was studying the empirical sciences in college, there were certain principles unable to be explained through research and study. These were often referred to as the "black box" and disqualified by science.

If there was ever any question about an origin of a formula, a number seeming to be arbitrarily chosen, "oops," that's the black box.

I've found that the "black box" idea isn't good enough for most people. It is not so much the question of "why" a particular formula works or does not; it's more about the "feeling" you get and the urge or need to understand that "feeling."

The truth is, one cannot possibly understand the whole of the divine plan. Our rational minds want to explain everything. We want to know how it all connects to the beginning of time. We can't possibly "know." But we can "feel."

Bottom line? The most important moment in time is the "now" or the "present." This present or pre-sent moment is all you have to work with.

So regardless of doctrine or discipline, I would ask you to take a look at where you are "now," in this exact moment. Then ask yourself these two very important questions:

- Do you have a sense of being connected to nature, even if you can't really explain it?
- Do you have a sense of your own spirituality?

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Here's my favorite support to this wisdom: When studies have researched people who live to be 100 and beyond, as well as people who have healed their bodies from serious illnesses, most take into account their sense of connection with their "self" and their God.

It is as George E. Vaillant, M.D., longtime director of the Harvard Study of Adult Development, explains in his book *Aging Well*: it's not genes but disposition that brings about happy aging.

So What Does All This Have To Do With You Being Healthy?

Why is it so important, then, when we are discussing "prevention" or "wellness," to cover this idea of being connected to the spirit?

The answer is, when you connect to the "whole" of yourself, you will find the space absent of disease or any other negativity. Even by looking at the way the word "disease" comes apart (dis – ease), it's easy to realize that by finding your part in the "whole" of nature and "re-mem-bering" yourself within it, you become complete.

The medical profession and the pharmaceutical profession do not aim to "re-mem-ber" this. When they put billions of dollars into treating "symptoms" of illness, they are often applying a Band-Aid to a greater problem.

I believe that symptoms are nature's way of talking to us. They become manifest in our lives and are letting us know that something is, in fact, out of

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balance. The key is, first, tapping into this nature, aiming to find what is out of balance, then striving to move back into that place. Yes, this could include taking medication, but only if you “feel” it’s necessary for your return to health.

I believe communication with the body is equally as important as treating symptoms. And, until very recently, there has been precious little said or done to explain these ideas of wellness and prevention to the general public. No longer. Many Doctors, as well as the general public are breaking the silence. And they should.

I believe, in many cases, disease *can* be prevented even before it is made manifest. And a lot of the public is beginning to agree. By demanding better healthcare, and demanding knowledge of how to better care for yourself, you are literally preventing trouble later.

Unfortunately, this is a concept of which – until now – insurance companies and the medical profession have ignored. This occurs, most likely, because its principles are so simple and holistic that these institutions see no way to charge for them. With so many speaking out, however, healthcare could only improve.

Begin When You Are Well

The best time to begin this quest of finding the “balance” of your inner nature is when you are well.

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It is hard to forget that as a society, our atmosphere is polluted, our waters are contaminated, our foods are treated with pesticides and are processed and packaged. Yet, our bodies somehow still manage to support us. With all the illness around us, it is also not difficult to see, as a society, our general health is declining.

I believe that our bodies have a natural way of healing, despite all of these pollutants. I also believe that there is a divine purpose for all of us wrapped tightly into our DNA, unraveling carefully and piece by piece revealing itself to us.

Although we cannot see beyond the bend in the road, we are given clues as to how to navigate. Therefore, symptoms, as I've defined them, are clues that the body has become out of balance.

Thus, we come back to the big picture.

Some Creative Leaps You May Need To Take To Get The Most From This Book

In effort to “tap into” this place of perfect health, you will be required to do some mind bending. This book presumes that you are willing to make the leap of faith with these important concepts. Before proceeding, check yourself by turning these affirmations over in your mind. Say them out loud if you like. Record how they make you feel:

- I am part of nature and part of the great scheme. I fit neatly and perfectly into the natural flow of

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universal events. Because I know all of this to be true, why would I choose to fight nature?

- This body is my temple, my vehicle for which to experience life. I fully trust and believe it has its own natural intelligence and ability to heal itself and carry out its divine purpose.

How do you feel when you read these affirmations? Do they feel comfortable for you? Ask yourself, are you willing to think outside of the box to live and be well? It's important to make this distinction. The first step to wellness is not only about believing in a great plan of the universe, but seeing your place in it. The words "know thyself" come to mind. How well do you know "you"?

I believe that you do have the ability and the intelligence to communicate with your body. This is what *Spiritual Fitness* is all about. During our time together, it is my wish that you are willing to make the leap of faith and begin to establish a communication with yourself. It is wisdom that will last a lifetime.

What About The Black Box?

A disclaimer for the road: Much of this information is counterintuitive. For example, when you go to your doctor with low back pain or a virus, your doctor will most often treat your back or your virus. That's fine. Your take-home message here is to take this information one step further.

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You will look at things differently now, and raise your consciousness by asking yourself, “What if these symptoms are actually trying to communicate something to me?”

If you can remember the last time you were ill, perhaps you could also associate this with an event or circumstances in your life. Perhaps it had been a long time since you’d taken a day off from work, you were stressed about money or deadlines, or you were just unhappy or uneasy. These are very common ways for tension and illness to manifest themselves.

Remember, I am not suggesting that for *every* symptom there is a higher problem and you need to drive yourself crazy looking for it. I am merely suggesting that illnesses are often made manifest by what we place our attention on.

I merely want you to see the whole picture. In Western medicine, as a result of our symptoms, our doctor aims to give us something to bring us back to “health.” If we are simply given a salve for our pain, it will only continue to mask the underlying dis-ease or imbalance.

Therefore, I *am* suggesting that you learn to “work with” Western medicine, using this as a means to health.

How?

Before you act, pop a pill, have an operation, first take some time to “sit” with your dis-ease. Look to your feelings; ask yourself what is coming up for you. What I am suggesting is that nature and God are making an effort to communicate with you.

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I trust that God wants you to live well and will reward you by giving you more of your healthy self when you listen to this inner nature. Use this intelligence to make *conscious* choices and bring your “self” back into balance. Take back your own power by becoming more *aware*.

Awareness is where it all begins. Be aware of each moment. I think you will find that as you become more aware and positive in your thinking, your experience will arise out of your intentions for it.

So, keep in mind as you progress, your only need is to be aware, to change your focus, from that of being a “victim” of dis-ease to one of taking responsibility for your life, your health and your body.

Remember: You always have choices and are never without options. Listen to yourself and be aware.

Take A Personal Inventory

As I’ve said before, all beginnings start in the “now.” The past is behind and our focus is on the present. There is one more component to consider before embarking on the path to living well: Before you decide where you’re going, you’ll need to begin where you are.

This first step of cultivating a spiritual discipline asks you to take a look at the larger picture, a broad brush stroke. Later, you will look at the inner picture and what lies beneath the true veil of you.

The first appropriate questions to ask yourself are:

- What is my spiritual discipline?

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- Do I believe in God or a higher power?

In this step, we will continue to explore these ideas. In “Step Two,” we will take them apart and bring them into full focus.

Do I Know The Ways In Which God Speaks To Me?

I’m glad you have made it past the gate and have answered the first questions on your quest to wellness. Now ask yourself these meditative questions:

- Are you aware of how you are connected to God?
- Are you aware that we are all connected?
- Have you ever thought of someone and they’ve called?
- Have you ever been in a traumatic situation and have known exactly what to do?
- Have you ever spoken and the perfect words have rolled off your tongue?
- Have you written something and the words just seem to flow out onto the paper?

If you have answered “yes” to any of these questions, you’ve seen and felt God at work in your life.

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It makes no difference how you believe all of this is caused. What is important is that you begin to become aware of it.

Your “Feelings”

Have you ever had a “feeling” about something, a hunch, something that said “do this” or “go here”?

Did you listen?

Did you know that this is just one more way for God to speak to you?

If so, how do you know when to believe this voice?

How do you know what to believe?

The answer is, when you are listening to that deep inner voice or what you could also call the power of your own feelings, begin to be aware of what that voice “sounds” like or what your feeling “feels” like.

If you have heeded a particular “call” and it turns out to have a message for you, you will know the voice I speak of.

Spiritual Discipline FAQs:

Why are we discussing this? Isn't this blasphemy?

Good question. Blasphemy? Some may say so, I suppose. However, I would caution you resist negativity and trust in your feelings, get closer to them. Allow your feelings to be your guide.

What does all this business of feelings have to do with living well?

Living well is a process. It is a process of uncovering your highest "self" and your purpose. After all, you didn't really think you came here just to take up space, did you?

Whether you know it or not, you have a purpose and it is part of a divine plan. Get excited!

Now you're really sounding mad. You mean I am actually supposed to enjoy myself here? It's not all about work, making money, getting ahead?

All of those things are secondary. If your health isn't superior, what good are any of these things? You will have no use for them.

When you've gotten your relationship with God in order, you will know without question that there is enough of everything for everyone. There is enough

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health, love, money. You will have anything you should desire.

Now I'm listening. You've gotten my attention with the last statement. How do I get to this place of knowing? I would like to get to this place of divine guidance. Can I really live my divine purpose, too?

Yes. It's very simple: Begin where you are and believe. If you can, give in, surrender, let go and embrace the wisdom inside of you. If you *can* do this, you will be well on your way to a more fulfilling life in this very moment.

The *7-Steps* are your tools; you are the vehicle. You *can* live your life well; you *can* enjoy good health, abundance and all that life has to offer.

The only requirements for this journey are an unwavering belief and an open mind. These *7-Steps*, when applied, will be your rite of passage. Try them. And soon you will find your connection.

Action Steps Toward A Spiritual Discipline:

Chart Your Path

This week, keep track of the ways that nature and God are communicating with you.

You will also want to take a personal inventory of where you are and the things about your body that you love, as well as the things about your body that you would like to change.

Begin Where You Are

Here are some suggested tools that you'll need for your trip:

- For each of the assignments in this step and in the latter steps, purchase two notebooks. You will want one large spiral-bound notebook where you can record your larger journal entries, and a small spiral-bound notebook you can carry with you to record your thoughts.
- Set aside some quiet time each day to answer your specific questions in your large notebook. Work through each step at your leisure.

Assignment One: Become Aware

Try to recall, if you can, a moment when you've spoken and your voice was not your own. Or perhaps you'll recall a time you were writing and the pen seemed to flow as if the words were simply rolling off the end.

When you've pinpointed one of these experiences, try to recall the circumstances. Record in your notebook your recollections: the setting, the characters, the plot.

Add to this experience anything you can recall about your "feelings." See if you can verbalize how you reacted to each of these critical elements. Then try to answer these questions:

- Would you agree, after looking back on this experience or experiences, that there was another force at play in your life?
- If you are open to this idea, and believe that you could connect to the divine, would you have any questions for God?

If so, jot them down in your notebook. This thought process has helped many people to begin dialoguing with God. Also, sending questions to the universe, in addition to Prayer, opens the channel for receiving answers.

Just as an example, here are some of the questions I asked in my notebook when I was writing this manuscript:

Q: How can I get this book out to people in effort to most help them?

Then, I wrote the next thought that came to my mind.

A: Get involved with readers by building an online community where you can reach people. Aim to build a strong community of health-minded people.

Other times answers are less clearly defined. Sometimes, they will come in the form of dreams or “Ah!” moments (keep your small spiral notebook handy for these). The key here, as I’ve said, is to become aware. If you ask questions, you *will* receive answers. It’s just a matter of being open to them.

I invite you to try this process and begin your relationship with yourself. I believe you will find it one of the most rewarding experiences you’ve ever had.

This week, be aware of how often God becomes a part of your life and is there to guide you.

Assignment Two: Get To Know Your Body

As we’ve already discussed: Health is an inside job. Healing and wellness come from within.

Therefore, to begin living well, it’s important to establish a baseline by which to gauge yourself.

You know your body better than anyone does. This book aims only to facilitate you in enhancing your relationship to your body. The importance of learning

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about your body and treating it with love and respect cannot be underestimated.

Your next assignment for this week, then, is to take an inventory of your body. It's painless, promise!

- First, in your journal, establish five things that you love about your body. You can, of course, think of more, but be sure to record them in your journal.
- Next, think about what it is about your body you would like to change. Jot these things down as well.
- Then, once you have created a list of ideas you love and would like to change about your body, create affirmations to support positive growth.

For example: What I love about my body is that I am tall. So in the present tense I will write: *I AM tall, I love that about myself. I AM grateful to be tall.*

If I am happy with my dress size: *I AM a perfect dress size, I AM so grateful!*

In this way, continue your gratitude list even with those things about yourself that make you unhappy. Especially then. It's simple mathematics: Add your negatives to create a positive.

Here's another example. If I am unhappy with my weight, I will write in my journal:

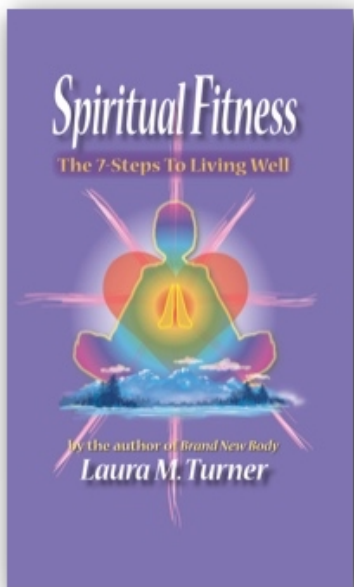
All things in my life lend themselves to my 10-pound weight loss. I am grateful for that. And so it is!

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When you have written your list, review it daily. Read your affirmations again and again, or better yet, write them over again. In doing so, you will be training your subconscious (a most powerful secret weapon).

When you feel in your heart that you *believe* what you have written and are grateful in earnest, then (and only then) will you be ready for the next step.

The work becomes a little more difficult in “Step Two.” You will use your mind, training it through creative visualization. Thus, you will be teaching your mind to manifest into your life, all that you wish.



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